

Early College Folio

The House of Education Needs Overhaul

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Social Justice in the Language Classroom Series: Argentina

La Guerra Sucia y Los Desparecidos
(The Dirty War and The Disappeared)

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EDITORS' NOTE: *This lesson plan is one of five projects created out of the Bard Early College Fellowship, which have been highlighted for the first issue of Early College Folio. Read Ligaya Franklin's "[Early College Pedagogy: An Introduction to the Bard Early College Fellowship](#)," for a comprehensive review of the fellows, their pedagogical approaches, and the broader goals of the fellowship.*

SUMMARY

In this unit, which is part of a larger series, students build their oral comprehension, speaking, reading and writing skills in Spanish. Students expand their vocabulary, adopt language to discuss and analyze films, and polish their writing and thinking skills in Spanish, while learning about a historical moment that shaped an important social justice movement and inspired generations towards human rights activism.

OVERVIEW

As part of the high school language sequence, students in the Spanish language track receive an overview of various Spanish-speaking countries and their cultures, customs, and history. In the college program, the first semester of Spanish incorporates a more profound education about the particular cultures through an introduction to the literature and literary movements these countries have produced.

The language classroom is an ideal space to deliver and practice language content, but also to introduce students, early on, to the multiple issues affecting Latinos, and Latin American immigrants, as well as the socio-historical underpinnings that affect the region and prompted policies within the US that currently shape the lives of individuals and communities of Latin American and Hispanic heritage. Additionally, students have opportunities to learn about

some of the key historical events that gave rise to social activism movements within the Latin American region.

Through the viewing of the Academy Award winning film *La historia oficial* (1985),¹ students in high school *Spanish for Beginners II* or *Spanish Honors* courses will learn about The Dirty War (a campaign of terror), *los desaparecidos*, (victims kidnapped, tortured, and murdered, whose bodies were later disappeared by the military government), and about *Las Madres* and *Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo* (human rights organizations with the goal of finding missing sons, daughters, and grandchildren stolen and illegally adopted during the Argentine dictatorship, respectively).

In this three-week unit (a total of 12 50-minute sessions), students will also learn to “read” and discuss a film by adopting and incorporating vocabulary pertinent to cinema, both in their speech and writing, expand their cultural vocabulary particular to Argentina, develop their oral comprehension skills, and further their fluency in speaking. The class will engage in discussions about human rights and politics of the time and learn to relate them to global issues pertinent to present day. Further, through the use of a wide variety of Writing and Thinking (W&T) techniques in Spanish, students will learn to translate the exercises from workshop to the Spanish classroom, thus preparing them for future Writing and Thinking workshops in future Spanish literature courses.²

ISSUES ADDRESSED

- Language competency (speaking, reading and writing) through vocabulary building, oral exercises, discussions and writing assignments
- Finding the right critical vocabulary for students to engage in discussions about film and literature
- Debunking myths about cultures, countries and political structures
- Translating Writing & Thinking techniques to Spanish
- Giving voice to the voiceless
- Social activism

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Greater fluency in the language (spoken and oral comprehension)
- Adoption of critical language to discuss films and literature
- Learn to read/analyze film as a text
- More in-depth awareness of countries, cultures, politics and history
- Awakened social consciousness
- Produce writings that could be published in *Immigrant Voices Magazine*, *La Voz*, *The Hype*, or presented at the annual Symposium Day
- Create a wall of memory for our school community
- Feel comfortable using Writing & Thinking techniques in a language

- other than English
- Prepare students for future analysis of texts (poetry, essay, short story, film) in Spanish
- Set the foundational knowledge for tests that touch upon issues of censorship, exile, dictatorships and military violence, repression and civil engagement
- Make connections between past events and present ones beyond the country in focus

SIGNATURE PEDAGOGIES EMPLOYED

- Media integration
- Writing to learn
- Project-based learning
- Collaborative learning
- W&T strategies (journal prompts, focused free-writing (FFW), free writing (FW), loop writing, text rendering, believing & doubting, process writing, small group critique)
- Discussion-based learning
- Experiential and process learning
- Closing activities

TIMELINE FOR THREE WEEKS

WEEK 1 (4 DAYS, 45 MINUTES EACH DAY)

- Historical background and country research
- Introduction to The Dirty War and the Disappeared
- Vocabulary building, reviewing, practice
- Review *voseo*
- Start watching the film *La historia oficial*
- Begin each day with a brief vocab review

WEEK 2

- Resume film viewing
- Review film, comprehension, expressions, vocab and practice
- Film comprehension quiz
- Start reflective writing exercises

WEEK 3

- Lead writing workshops (brainstorm ideas, peer review drafts)
- Begin research on *los Desaparecidos* project
- Presentation of posters
- Creation of a memory wall
- Discussions and reflective writing on social activism, particularly the

Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and its leaders

- Mini-documentaries of grandchildren who were found through DNA matches
- Wrap up unit on a positive note and a letter to a loved one, sealed in an envelope to be delivered on a special day.

LESSON PLAN | DAY 1

1. Objectives

For students to review research content about the country (Argentina) and clarify what the Dirty War is, as well as its origins and effects. This discussion will also expand on students' vocabulary knowledge, oral comprehension, and speaking fluency.

2. Warm-up (10 mins)

Review of assigned research content. Ask questions about Argentina based on the homework sheet and have students respond out loud, review stats, correct any discrepancies.

3. FFW/Share (15 mins)

Based on the readings, ask a pointed question to determine comprehension and understanding of the issue. (5 mins to write and 10 mins to share).

- For example: *¿Qué es la Operación Cóndor?* (What is Operation Condor?)

4. Watch the short film *Los Desaparecidos*³ (The Vanished) (3:30 mins)

- Followed by a Free Write (5 mins) and Share (Quaker style) (7 mins)
- Comprehension questions review *preguntas de comprensión* (10 mins)
- Open class discussion about the video and readings

5. Homework

Review and study vocabulary (*La historia oficial*), cognates, and film terms.

LESSON PLAN | DAY 2

1. Objectives

To review vocabulary, practice pronunciation and usage of words and terms. Preparation to start watching film and have students interpret and translate vocabulary, expressions, phrases as they watch.

2. **Warm-up (14 mins)**
Review vocabulary through worksheets and modeling sentences using terms.
3. **Journal prompt 1 (4 mins)**
Now that you know a few terms about film, describe your favorite movie of all time.
4. **Journal prompt 2 (4 mins)**
Why is this your favorite movie?
5. **Journal prompt 3 (5 mins)**
Describe one scene from that movie using a few terms you have learned.
6. **Share (8 mins)**
Share the journal prompt entry #3 with the class, while writing terms used on the board and students try to guess which films their classmates are describing.
7. **Pre-Film viewing (5 mins)**
Prior to beginning the film, students review the first ten mins of the film's vocabulary.
8. **Film viewing (10 mins)**
As they watch the film, with their translation pages open, students listen and begin the translation of terms.
9. **Homework**
Review translation entries and self-correct using a dictionary.

LESSON PLAN | DAY 3-DAY 5

1. **Objectives**
Continue to watch the film and further translate terms. Review terms from the first 10 mins of the film.
2. **Warm-up (13 mins)**
Go over terms translated from the first 10 mins of the film and for HW. Have students pick two phrases and write two original sentences in Spanish. Review vocab with a worksheet / think of synonyms for those words.
3. **Pre-Film viewing (7 mins)**
Prior to beginning the film, students review the next 30 mins of the film's vocabulary.

4. Film viewing (30 mins)

As they watch the film, with their translation pages open, students listen and begin the translation of terms.

5. Homework

Review translation entries and self-correct using a dictionary.

Note: This plan is repeated through the next two days that the film is on view.

NOTES

1 *La historia oficial*, directed by Luis Puenzo (1985; Argentina: Almi Pitures, 1986).

2 The instructor has created a supplemental packet—not published here, though referred to throughout the lesson plan—to support in-class exercises and homework. It includes a historical review of *la guerra sucia* and vocabulary and translation exercises related to Argentina, Argentine Spanish language concepts like *voseo*, and the film *La historia oficial*. The packet also includes comprehension, discussion, and writing exercises related to the film and other media tied to The Dirty War and the Disappeared.

3 *Los Desaparecidos*, directed by Jefferson Bonar (2003).